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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 002203

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/26/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: "SI" RECALL CAMPAIGN MOBILIZES

CLASSIFIED BY: A/DCM ABELARDO A. ARIAS, FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D).

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (C) VENEZUELA'S COORDINADORA DEMOCRATICA IS GEARING UP ITS CAMPAIGN FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL RECALL REFERENDUM, ORGANIZING ITS GET-OUT-THE-VOTE PROGRAMS THROUGH POLITICAL PARTIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS. KEY OPPOSITION FIGURES HAVE EMBARKED ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL THROUGHOUT VENEZUELA, THOUGH STAYING "ON MESSAGE" WITH THE THEMES OF UNITY, UNEMPLOYMENT AND CRIME REMAINS A CHALLENGE, ACCORDING TO STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR JUAN FERNANDEZ. LACK OF CAMPAIGN FUNDS IS A PRINCIPAL IMPEDIMENT, WITH DONOR ENTHUSIASM CHILLY. END SUMMARY.

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FOLLOW THE MONEY  
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[1](#)2. (C) THE OFFICIAL CAMPAIGN PERIOD FOR THE RECALL REFERENDUM AGAINST PRESIDENT HUGO CHAVEZ BEGAN ON JULY 2. AFTER TAKING NEARLY A MONTH TO ORGANIZE, THE OPPOSITION HAS SHOWN SIGNS OF STARTING TO CAMPAIGN, ALBEIT AT A LOWER PROFILE. OPPOSITION LEADER JUAN FERNANDEZ, THE COORDINADORA DEMOCRATICA'S (CD) STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR FOR THE RECALL REFERENDUM, TOLD POLOFF JULY 8 THAT SECURING FUNDING IS A CENTRAL PRIORITY FOR THE OPPOSITION. FERNANDEZ SAID THE CAMPAIGN BUDGET CALLED FOR 8 BILLION BOLIVARS (ABOUT USD 2.9 MILLION AT THE INFORMAL EXCHANGE RATE), BUT ONLY 2.5 BILLION BOLIVARS (USD 890,000) HAD BEEN COLLECTED. FERNANDEZ SAID TRADITIONAL DONORS FROM THE BUSINESS SECTOR HAVE BEEN RELUCTANT TO GIVE BECAUSE OF DOUBT WHETHER THE OPPOSITION CAN WIN THE REFERENDUM -- BASED ON THE GREENBERG POLL SHOWING THE RACE AT A 48-48 TIE. FERNANDEZ SAID THEY HAD RECEIVED REPORTS THE GOV IS LEANING ON COMPANIES THAT HAVE TRADITIONALLY SUPPORTED THE REFERENDUM TO DISCOURAGE THEM FROM GIVING.

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MOBILIZATION EFFORTS UNDERWAY  
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[1](#)3. (C) FERNANDEZ SAID THE GET-OUT-THE-VOTE PROGRAMS ARE WELL UNDERWAY. POLITICAL PARTIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS ARE WORKING AT THE GRASSROOTS FOR VOLUNTEERS TO REACH OUT TO POTENTIAL VOTERS. THE CD IS ORGANIZING A TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM ("OPERATION KANGAROO") AND INFORMATION CENTERS (PROVIDING LEGAL AND LOGISTICAL AID) TO COVER THE VOTING CENTERS ON AUGUST 15. VOLUNTEERS ARE BEING GIVEN TEN VOTERS TO CONTACT AND ASSURE THEIR VOTE FOR THE REFERENDUM. FERNANDEZ SAID THE NGO SUMATE WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN DEVELOPING THE DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON THE VOTERS FOR THE MOBILIZATION EFFORT. THE CD'S REFERENDUM EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR, ENRIQUE NAIME, TOLD A/DCM JULY 7 THAT THE CD WOULD EXPLOIT THE INFRASTRUCTURE ("CUEVAS DEL GUACHARO") THAT THEY HAD DEVELOPED FOR THE APPEALS PROCESS.

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MESSAGE BETTER, BUT DISCIPLINE A PROBLEM  
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[1](#)4. (C) FERNANDEZ SAID THE CD WILL EMPHASIZE SOCIAL UNITY, JOBS, AND CRIME AS THEIR KEY THEMES. HE CONCEDED THERE ARE STILL TOO MANY VOICES SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF THE OPPOSITION, AND HE DOES NOT SEE IT PRACTICAL TO SILENCE MOST OF THEM. FERNANDEZ IS TRYING TO KEEP THE SPEAKERS ON THE SAME PAGE BY PRODUCING A DAILY MESSAGE EMPHASIZING THE THREE CENTRAL THEMES AND OTHER POLITICAL MESSAGES. FERNANDEZ SAID THERE IS A RIGOROUS CAMPAIGN SCHEDULE FOR KEY LEADERS. FERNANDEZ ALSO COORDINATES SPEAKERS AND THEMES FOR TELEVISION AND RADIO NEWS COMMENTARY PROGRAMS. HE NOTED THAT THE OPPOSITION PLANS RELEASE ITS "NATIONAL CONSENSUS PLAN" ON JULY 9.

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CAMPAIGN MATERIALS SCARCE, BUT COMING  
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[1](#)5. (C) FERNANDEZ SAID THE CD HAS BEEN SLOW TO GET CAMPAIGN

D THAT POSTER AND PAMPHLET DESIGN WAS FINISHED, AND THE DEMAND FROM VOLUNTEERS IS GREAT. CD ADVISORS CONFIRMED THE FINANCE CRUNCH TO POLCOUNS JULY 7, NOTING THEY HAD TO SCALE BACK PRINT RUNS AND ASK FOR CREDIT FROM THE PRINTERS. FERNANDEZ SAID ON JULY 8 THEY HAD REACHED AN AGREEMENT WITH A COMPANY TO DO ALL OF THEIR PRINTING FOR THE REFERENDUM.

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MEDIA CAMPAIGN SOLID, BUT LIMITED BY RULES  
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16. (C) FERNANDEZ SAID RADIO AND TELEVISION ADS ARE ALREADY RUNNING ON PRIVATE MEDIA OUTLETS. HE SAID RADIO AND TELEVISION ARE THE OPPOSITION'S PRINCIPAL METHOD FOR REACHING POORER NEIGHBORHOODS. THE ADS WILL KEY ON THE VOTER'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE, USING TESTIMONIALS FROM, FOR EXAMPLE, A POOR UNEMPLOYED PERSON HOPING A CHANGE WILL IMPROVE THE ECONOMY. FERNANDEZ SAID THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COUNCIL'S (CNE) PUBLICITY RULES ARE A HANDICAP FOR THE OPPOSITION, LIMITING THEM TO JUST THREE MINUTES PER TELEVISION STATION PER DAY. THE CNE RULES PERMIT PRO-CHAVEZ ADS TO RUN ON PRIVATE MEDIA AS WELL, WHICH COVERS 95 PERCENT OF THE AUDIENCE. FERNANDEZ SAID HIS "EQUAL TIME" ON STATE TELEVISION, WITH JUST FIVE PERCENT OF THE AUDIENCE, WAS NOT A FAIR EXCHANGE. HE ALSO COMPLAINED THAT CHAVEZ'S "CADENA" BROADCASTS, WHICH PRE-EMPT ALL PRIVATE RADIO AND TELEVISION, CONTINUE ALMOST DAILY, AND DO NOT REFRAIN FROM POLITICAL MESSAGES AS THE RULES STIPULATE.

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COMMENT  
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17. (C) FERNANDEZ BELIEVES THE OPPOSITION'S CAMPAIGN IS BUILDING MOMENTUM SLOWLY AND WILL PEAK IN THE DAYS JUST BEFORE THE AUGUST 15 REFERENDUM. WE SEE SIGNS THAT THE OPPOSITION IS INDEED WORKING. THE OPPOSITION HISTORICALLY IS BEST AT MOBILIZING PEOPLE, SOMETHING THAT IS HARD TO OBSERVE OR MEASURE UNTIL ELECTION DAY.  
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